

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

### Cant about Christ

SOME years ago, Gerald Massey, the author of *Natural Genesis* and the *Book of The Beginnings*, published a pamphlet on the *Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ*. He found the mythical Christ easily enough. Discovered him in Egypt, where he was worshipped centuries before the Christian Church was heard of. This, by the way, was admitted by some of the earliest Christians, who explained it as being due to the Devil. He knew that Christianity was coming and so forestalled the event. Nowadays the story of virgin-born gods who died on earth for the benefit of man, and were afterwards resurrected from the dead is among the commonplaces of comparative mythology. The origin of the Egyptian-Christian story has been disclosed by anthropologists. This is so far above dispute that many Christians admit it. But they behave regarding it much as the horse-dealer who sold a dud of a horse as a "hunter." The purchaser brought the animal back complaining that he was not a "hunter." "What made you call him one?" he asked the dealer. "Well," replied the man "I tried him for a number of things, but he didn't fit. So I said, God Almighty must have meant him for something; he must be a hunter." The modern Christian, determined to find some use for Jesus Christ, decides that if he was not a virgin-born God, then he must be a social reformer.

It was when Massey tried to find the historical Jesus that he found himself in difficulties. For outside the New Testament there is no conclusive evidence of his existence. Massey decided it was probably a Roman soldier's son who was executed one hundred years before the date given for the New Testament Jesus, who might fill the bill. But competent critics have doubted even this. It is true there was nothing new in a wandering preacher travelling about as a messenger from God. Neither was there

anything strikingly original in what he is reported to have said. But in face of the decay of Jesus Christ, the God, it was considered good tactics to keep the name, so to speak, on the billhead of the firm. And as the early part of the nineteenth century was a period when social reform was in the air, to reclothe the New Testament Jesus as a social reformer was not bad business. It kept the virgin-born God before the public eye. So it happens that to-day Christians—the better educated section—accept Jesus for one reason, and justify their acceptance by another and a different one. The Jesus Christ that is argued for on the social level is not the one they hail as their saviour. The Jesus of their religion is not the one they argue for. In business this policy is described as obtaining under false pretences.

\* \* \*

### A Phantom Jesus

In another part of this issue there will be found a letter which I notice here because it presents this popular "bogey" of a social-reforming Jesus for consideration, and I hope the reader of these notes will make himself acquainted with that letter before going any further. I must confess that at first glance I thought the letter was a not very noteworthy essay in sarcasm. Finally, I concluded that the writer was actually in earnest, although he did not appear to be very familiar with the history of Christian mythology, or with the history of ethics in general. He retails, with all the sincerity of a recent convert, an apology for continuing a clandestine worship of the god Jesus. I have dealt with this apology for Jesus many times, but evidently one more treatment will not do any harm. That is why I am dealing with the subject at some length here, instead of merely printing the letter and so being done with it.

First of all I must congratulate Mr. Boulting on having made a real discovery. He has discovered that the Jesus of the New Testament had a "social policy." That should rank with the interpretation of the Rosetta stone which did so much to unlock the life of the old Egypt. An inspiration to work for the betterment of one's fellows is a common Christian claim, but I do not recall anyone claiming that Jesus laid down a "social policy," new or old. The earlier generations of Christians certainly knew nothing about it. Jesus reminded them that the end of the world was at hand: his followers retained that belief for several generations, and with that belief they neither looked for nor needed a social policy. I suggest to anyone who is bitten by this Jesus-a-social-reformer delusion to go through the New Testament, pencil in hand, and write down all that Jesus had to say with regard to a social policy. I fancy a postage stamp will do in these days of paper scarcity. To begin with he will find nothing about the family. He may find something against it, for we have the word of Jesus that they who would inherit the next world



neither marry nor are given in marriage. He will note that Jesus was a celibate, and believed in celibacy. He will find nothing about the education of children, but the advice that his followers must become as little children, and I agree that if one wishes to be true to the Jesus myth, it is well not to grow up too quickly. The investigator will find nothing about education, about art, about the constitution of the State, or of the reciprocal obligations of the State and the citizen, save that one is to render to the State the things that belong to it. But about this there has never been any dispute whatever. There has only been a difference of opinion as to what did belong to the State. He will find this alleged social reformer supporting every current superstition, including the belief in devils as the cause of disease, and by his example and teaching of celibacy undermining the quality of society for generations—so far as his example and teaching was followed.

Contrariwise, our searcher would find that it was to Greece and Rome that the world had to go for a family and social policy. There is nothing in either the Bible or the New Testament against polygamy. Monogamy, too, came from Greece and Rome. If the student will turn to the Platonic dialogues, he will there find numerous discussions on social policy, and will learn much, if he has wit enough, from his study. But he must steer clear of the New Testament. The searcher after truth, not after a mythical figure, will also discover that the modern world owes the impetus of its law to Rome, and to some extent its political ideas, and the impetus of its philosophy, science and art to Greece.

Closer research will show Mr. Boulting the passion for intellectual liberty comes to us from Ancient Greece, as does the teaching that the search for truth is the highest aim of man. The teaching of Jesus was "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The conception and practice of a society governed by impartial law, irrespective of creed or religion, come to us from Rome. The teaching of Jesus and of the New Testament is void of any kind of social teaching, as such, and never recognizes the social value of the intellectual side of life.

He will also find in the New Testament a strange absence of any genuine ethical theory. Slavery, although existing around him, was never condemned by Jesus, and it is strongly supported in the New Testament. The morality of the Greeks and Romans was completely social in their theory of the origin of morals and in its application. Aristotle's small treatise about ethics will tell one more in a few pages of the nature of ethics than he can get in the whole of the New Testament. Epicurus would have looked on the followers of Jesus as almost completely demoralized. Lucretius or Seneca would have read them a lesson. The ethics of Jesus is based by implication on pure selfishness. If you are to give in secret, it is that you will be rewarded openly. You will be saved by your belief, not by your acts. This is the whole moral of the story of the thieves on the cross, and that moral has persisted in every branch of the Christian Church until to-day. Of course, all actions have consequences, but there is a devil of a difference between benefit following a good action and doing a good action to secure a benefit. The right teaching came from Confucius, who kept the gods at a distance: "Sacrifice is not a thing coming to a man from without; it has its birth in his heart." And also from the Atheist, Spinoza, when he said, happiness is not the reward of virtue; virtue is happiness. No genuinely Christian teacher ever reached that stage. It would have made his religion look too paltry.

### Jesus and Humanity

My kindly adviser informs me that Jesus upheld "the innate dignity of man and the worth of human personality," and "it was for this he was crucified." Mr. Boulting must really read the New Testament again. Jesus Christ, so runs the story, was executed for the common crime of blasphemy. Nothing else was alleged. Besides, theologically, the reason for Jesus being here at all was that man was innately wicked, full of vileness, and it was to save him that Jesus came and was killed. There could have been no Christian religion without this. Jesus was an ancient victim to the policy of appeasement. There is something significant also that we are suffering to-day from the last costly application of that policy—after a week's prayer to Jesus. That man has no innate dignity is one of the oldest of Christian dogmas.

Mr. Boulting thinks he presses his moral home by referring to the "helot" civilizations of Greece and Rome. But Jesus said nothing in condemnation of slavery. And the comparison is not just to either Rome or Greece. For, strangely enough, while slavery always involves some degree of degradation, Greek and Roman slavery was not based on any theoretical difference in the dignity or in the nature of men. Slaves in Greece and Rome were counted as equal to others as human beings. They might and did become philosophers, teachers, orators, the friends of the greatest in the land. They were not theoretically inferior. It was status as a citizen that was affected, not the slave's dignity as a man. It was under the rule of the Christian Church that the slave became a mere article of merchandise without rights and without admitted dignity. It was the Christian Church that became the largest of slave owners, and the Christian Church was the last to release slaves. One really must not confuse the slave of antiquity with the slave of medieval and later Christian ages. And there was the distinct teaching of Paul that slaves were to be obedient to their masters, whether their masters were good or bad.

There is one rather cryptic passage in my critic's letter that deserves a word or two. He says that "no ethic, no philosophy can endure the passage of two thousand years unless it has contributed something to the total of human awareness." My study of life and history, has shown me that anything may endure for many thousand years, provided conditions favour its survival. The belief in witches, and of demons as the cause of disease—which latter was one of the contributions of Jesus to "social policy" has endured until to-day. And given sufficient power I see no reason why Hitlerism should not exist for a very lengthy period indeed. It is a question of conditions. The reverence for a King was established in the far-off days when the King was an incarnation of the tribal god—and we have a quite unjustifiable reverence for Kings to-day. It is a question of conditions.

Finally, I can assure Mr. Boulting that I have not been inordinately provoked by a "discredited sob-sister." I am not easily provoked by anyone, but I do trouble to examine a person or an argument, when by doing so he, or she, serves to point a moral or adorn a tale. And, suspicion for suspicion, I have the impression that Mr. Boulting has been sitting at the feet of some half-educated Christian believer who has imposed upon his listener's lack of acquaintance with the origin, nature and influence of the Christian mythology.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Do not ask who said this or that, but mark what is spoken.—Landor.



## Bedborough and the Babes

Quick, my tablets, memory.—*Matthew Arnold.*

It was with deep regret that I heard of the death of George Bedborough. Of late years we had drifted apart, but I saw a good deal of him about forty years ago, when he seemed destined to take a prominent place in the ranks of Freethought. A good writer, an attractive speaker, possessing a pleasant personality, brimful of ideas, he was popular to a degree. Even then he was helping to make history with the Legitimation League, the chief aims of which were to raise the legal status of children born out of wedlock, and to discuss sex matters without fear or favour. Bedborough was not the founder of this society. That honour, I think, belonged to another, but Bedborough secured the necessary publicity for the movement, and was largely instrumental in breaking down public prejudice.

One day Bedborough rushed into my place of business and said he wanted my help in starting a new periodical. "On what lines?" I asked innocently. A serious rival to the *Infant's Magazine*, he responded smilingly. A little later *The Adult* commenced its short and exciting career. It was actually a review devoted to the exposition of all aspects of the sex question, and its contributors included Frederick Rockell, Henry Seymour, and George Bedborough.

Bedborough was a veritable Mercutio, and he carried his propaganda with a smile and a light heart. *The Adult* was a dainty publication, too elegant for an old journalistic hand like myself. It was octavo in size, with few pages, and far too reminiscent of a parish magazine for my liking. But, despite its pretty dress, it carried its message far and wide.

At the meetings of the Legitimation League, he used to read sheaves of congratulatory communications from literary and other celebrities, and I recall that Bernard Shaw, Robert Buchanan, and Thomas Hardy were among the number. How Bedborough obtained these inspiring messages was a matter of conjecture among the members until they discovered that he worked hard at corresponding with well-known people.

During the ensuing years Bedborough dabbled in authorship and publishing. At intervals he would send me beautifully bound and handsomely printed booklets containing his own excursions into letters. These were always dainty and charming, as befitted the artist that he was. But they left no permanent record on contemporary literature for all their æsthetic charm.

Ellis's monograph on *The Psychology of Sex* was not published by Bedborough. It was issued by "The University Press," which sprang suddenly into existence at the time Bradlaugh died, and had a short and meteoric career. At the passing of the great Freethought leader, his paper, *The National Reformer*, fell on evil days, and all the efforts of John M. Robertson could not save it. The trouble was that the *Reformer* became too scholarly and too academic. A popular paper, least of all a propagandist organ, cannot be carried on successfully on the lines of the old Edinburgh or Quarterly Reviews. Robertson was a great scholar, but he lacked the magic journalistic touch of G. W. Foote, who could write on the multiplication-table and make his article interesting to the man in the street.

So, the *National Reformer* became the monthly *Free Review*, which may be described as "the mixture as before." Failing again, this periodical passed into

the hands of "The University Press," and was renamed *The University Magazine*. It did not prosper under the new management, chiefly because it devoted too much space to academic sexology and too little space to Freethought. This proved to be the periodical's last incarnation, and it ceased after a year or two of very chequered existence.

A short, if not a merry life, is, unfortunately, the usual fate of Freethought publications. How Mr. Cohen has kept the *Freethinker* going all through the troubled years is a miracle more marvellous than any recorded in the Gospels. The Freethought Movement has never had adequate financial resources, and its leaders have had to content themselves with soldiers' wages. Bedborough, for example, had to earn his own living, and had to give his scant leisure to the Movement. Ninety per cent of his energy was expended in the mere struggle for existence. Here was a man of real ability, and it was only possible to make a partial use of his service. What a tragedy! Owing to their wealth, the Christian Churches are able to pay men well, and throw them a house into the bargain, with good prospects of preferment, pelf, and power.

As an example of the enormous difficulties of conducting advanced periodicals, it is no secret that over nine thousand pounds was spent on *Justice* during a period of twenty years, and it fell on evil days at last. The arresting personality of H. M. Hyndman could not make the paper a commercial success. Robert Blatchford was an extraordinarily popular writer, and his *Clarion* had a very much larger circulation than *Justice*, but even Blatchford's deserved popularity, and the assistance of a really brilliant staff of writers, could not make his paper pay without subsidies from his readers. And if two such men cannot make such papers a commercial success, how is the thing to be done at all?

Freethought is a far wider and nobler evangel than a purely political one. It has its roots in intellectual necessity, and, deeper still, in ethical right. It is based on the psychological law of human development. The Freethought leaders are apostles of progress, but they have to pay a bitter price for their leadership. Hissed at by superior people, cursed and stoned by the ignorant, they eat the bitter bread of banishment. The most mortifying thing that can be mentioned is that of seeing humbugs and charlatans ride by in their motors; or, in other words, to mark the success of humbug and hypocrisy, whilst they themselves find that intellectual honesty spells hardship and ostracism. Their true place in the world is beside the philosophers, rather than with the politicians who ever base their calculations on the foibles and follies of their fellow-men. So, if you want to keep your leaders free from embarrassment and anxiety, give them all the financial support possible. Our country owes so much to men like Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Foote and their successors. For, like Milton before them, they placed freedom of thought above all other liberties, and recognized clearly that if the waters of truth "flow not in a perpetual progression they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition."

MIMNERMUS

It is not the man who is beside himself, but he who is cool and collected, who is master of his countenance, of his voice, of his actions, of his gestures, of every part of his play, who can work upon others at his pleasure.

*Didrot.*



## Judaic Life in the Middle Ages

THE records of Israel's life in England during the Medieval Period have been recently enriched by the publication of the Rev. Michael Adler's *Jews of Medieval England* (Jewish Historical Society, 1939). This volume's opening essay reviews the position of the Jewess in England until the Expulsion of the race in the reign of Edward I. The most surprising fact revealed is the remarkably prominent part played by Jewish women in Anglo-Jewry at a time when the average Christian wife's freedom was very strictly limited. It was the latter's bounden duty to submissively obey her lord's commands, whatever they might be. Widows and spinsters, however, could sue in the Law Courts and sign a will, but the English wife was entirely subservient to her husband, for her chattels became his property, and his authority was legally indisputable.

On the other hand, the Jewess enjoyed ample liberty. Within the framework of the Rabbinic Code, pronounced female independence was displayed. As records preserved in London and other cities prove, she owned landed property and dwelling-places in her own right. As Adler states: in these documents, "she conducts operations on a large scale, often in partnership with her husband or son or other prominent financiers. She transacts business on her husband's behalf, she bails him out of prison, she brings actions of all kinds against Jews and non-Jews alike, and her claims are frequently upheld by the king's courts."

Nor was any discrimination made between the sexes in days of adversity. Equally with her male kindred she suffered all indignities and disabilities to which Jewry was subjected. And when convicted for infringements of the law no distinction was made in the penalties imposed. Also, under an order issued by Stephen Langton and the Church Council in 1222, the Jewess was commanded to wear on her outer garment the badge of her tribe. This decree, however, seems to have been disregarded, so it was renewed in 1253 and in 1279 Edward I. ordered its strict observance.

Maitland's interesting essay: *The Deacon and the Jewess*, will be recalled by all students of that fine writer's compositions. In this curious episode, Robert, Deacon of Reading, was so smitten with the charms of a Jewess, that he embraced the Hebrew faith in the opening years of the thirteenth century. As Adler intimates: "Archbishop Langton caused the recreant priest, who had assumed the name of Haggai, to be tried before an ecclesiastical court, and Robert expiated his crime at the stake, this being the first instance known in English history by burning for heresy."

Weddings in wealthy Jewish families were frequently celebrated with extravagant ostentation. Despite the increasing anti-Jewish sentiments of the time, four years only before their banishment, a Jewish marriage feast at Hereford was arranged on a most lavish scale. To this entertainment various Christians were invited, but this friendly gesture so scandalized the local Bishop that he threatened the excommunication of "any members of his flock who took part in these nuptials according to their 'detestable rites.'" This did not prevent several from accepting Jewish hospitality and they were placed under the ban of the Church for their disobedience." So the angry Bishop acquainted the Pope with these nefarious proceedings and His Holiness issued a Bull authorizing the English Episcopacy to end all social intercourse between Christians and unbelieving Israelites.

A Jewish widow was legally entitled to her *Ketubah* (marriage settlement), but all relicts surrendered one

third of their property in the form of death duties to the Crown. In truth, throughout the whole period of the Jewish settlement until the Expulsion in 1290, the Jews were the constantly fleeced serfs of the King. Deprived, as they almost invariably were, of any direct participation in trade and industry, they had practically no alternative save that of finance in the form of usury.

In 1234 a Canterbury Jew was converted to Catholicism when, according to custom, all the convert's property escheated to the Crown. In this instance, His Majesty graciously permitted the apostate to retain a dwelling in the Jewry, but this he immediately made over to the Abbey of St. Augustine. The monks then sold the edifice to an opulent local Jew, but the convert's spouse, Chera, claimed possession of the property as part of her *Ketubah*. The Court, however, decided that as she had flatly refused to share her husband's conversion her rights completely lapsed.

Adler notes that: "Every effort was made to convert the Jews to the dominant religion, but without very marked success. From the date of the coming of the Jew to England with the Norman Conquest until the year 1232, the name of only one Jewess is recorded who, in the year 1180, joined the Church and assumed the name of Isabella." There are, however, several male converts mentioned who were seemingly regarded as insincere renegades by their orthodox brethren and bitter resentment was displayed.

The darker aspects of Jewish character are frankly acknowledged by Adler. Many very serious charges were made against Jewesses, yet, even in those intolerant times, they were frequently acquitted by the Courts. Evidently, crime was as common among Jews as among their Gentile neighbours. Apart from differences with the native community, they occasionally quarrelled very bitterly among themselves. "Thus we read," states Adler, "that Belassez of London gave evidence against Moses of Dog Street and Bona his wife that they had defrauded a Christian woman in the purchase of some dress material, with the result that the two defendants were committed to the custody of the Constable of the Tower of London." In another instance, bitter acrimony involving assault and robbery was disclosed when, as Adler informs us, "with a Christian jury, the dirty linen of the community was washed in public." Even so, to err continues human in every clime and land.

It seems surprising that Jewesses were some of the most successful financiers of the period, and a list is printed of the numerous women whose money-lending activities were conducted on an extensive scale. They undertook financial transactions with clients of every social standing. It is intimated that: "Bishops, abbots, prioresses and many of the lesser clergy had dealings with them; merchants, farmers and tradesmen came to them for temporary help."

A Winchester Jewess was the most famous of these female financiers, and among her many customers were the Cathedral clergy. When her second husband, David of Oxford, died, she paid in death duties to the Crown the sum of 5,000 marks (equal at least to £100,000 of our present currency), while to ensure the receipt of the tax this indomitable woman was confined in the Tower. The library of her late husband was examined by the State officials so that any writing that aspersed Judaic or Christian law should be destroyed. After the payment of the legacy dues, the Winchester Jewess was released from prison to enable her to attend to the debts owing to her deceased husband, which included a substantial loan to the Earl of Leicester (Simon de Montfort). "One can well understand," comments Adler, "why the armies



of the rebel Earl later sacked the Jewries during the Civil War and destroyed all written evidence of debts—in addition to decreeing all Jewish debts to be annulled."

Not only were the Jews the first to erect stone houses in England, but their compelled contributions towards the rebuilding of Westminster Abbey in the reign of Henry III. were very heavy. These offerings were made as "a grant to God and St. Edward." Licoricia, the Winchester Jewess' contribution alone has been estimated at £77,000 in present-money value. She protested to the King against the wholesale destruction of the Jewish registry of bonds during the Barons' Wars and was graciously granted compensation. But, greatly to the grief of the Jewish community, she was murdered in 1277.

Among other interesting features of this volume is an essay on the Jewry of medieval Canterbury. There, except at the period of Stephen Langton's Primacy, the Jews evidently lived on quite friendly terms with the Cathedral clergy.

The Jewish habitations were built on Church property, and their Synagogue stood in the Cathedral domains. But with their expulsion under Edward I., the Canterbury Jewry was extinguished, and it was not until 1763 that another congregation gathered, and this also has now disappeared.

Many were unaware that a royal residence for converted Jews long stood on the site now occupied by the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane, London. This retreat was instituted by Henry III., in 1232, and from that year till the Hebrew Expulsion in 1290 the baptism of Jews is frequently recorded in official documents of the period. In this building, the *Domus Conversorum*, as it was called, the converts became "the recipients of the royal bounty." The inmates, both male and female, were granted a money payment to enable them to live.

The conversion of infidels and heretics was ever a leading desire of the Church. Adler notes the fact that the Third Lateran Council concluded that "Converts ought to be in better circumstances than they had been before accepting the faith." It was customary to make provision for destitute converts in monastic establishments, but the earliest organized attempts to secure conversion in England were initiated with the founding of the *Domus Conversorum*. A contemporary document states that this Home had been erected as a dwelling-place "for all converted Jews who had abandoned the blindness of Judaism."

At least for a time, this retreat seems to have housed a number of inmates. So far as is known, the highest figure recorded is that of 96 in 1280. It is surmised that this increase "may have resulted from the enactment of the Statute of the Jewry by Edward I., in 1275, which crippled all Jewish business, to the impoverishment of the King's serfs, the weaker members taking refuge in the royal institution."

Throughout three centuries, during which it remained illegal for a Jew to dwell in this country, the *Domus* documents mention the names of various Jews who resided here. There were small colonies of secret Sephardi Jews who dwelt in London and Bristol from the reign of Henry VII. to that of Elizabeth. Indeed, Queen Bess's physician, Lopez, was a member of the chosen race, while Menda, another noteworthy Jew, postponed his public baptism for six years. Very few of the community, however, renounced their ancestral cult or sought sanctuary in the *Domus*.

The buildings formerly tenanted by the converts have for many centuries been the repository for the Chancery Rolls, and this explains the long associa-

tion of the Master of the Rolls with the structure. "The houses and the chapel," states Adler, "have now disappeared . . . and on their site stands the splendid pile of buildings of the Public Record Office." Apart from an arch of an antique chapel, all vestiges of the *Domus* vanished in 1891.

T. F. PALMER

## "Evo-Creationism"

Now that the accumulated evidence for biological evolution is too strong even for High Churchmen to ignore, attempts are often made at a compromise with the doctrine of Special Creation. Such attempts take several forms.

The postulate of Archtypes in the mind of God was first associated with the name of Cuvier, the anatomist. Instead of the whole of life being traced back to a common ancestry, God is supposed to have proceeded with foresight along very definite independent pipe lines culminating in the particular form of life in view. To this scheme the horse's ancestry gave at least some superficial support. The whole idea, however, fails before the accumulating facts of embryology, geology, physiology and anatomy, let alone logic.

Examples of common ancestry, says *The Science of Life* (Wells and Huxley), could be "multiplied almost *ad infinitum*." The facts include, for instance, the rudimentary pelvis and hind legs of the whale, the clawed leg-remnant of the anaconda, the wing of the N.Z. kiwi with feathers like hair, the teeth of the baby platybus which never cut the gum, the teeth developed by the whale embryo and absorbed before birth, the useless left lung in some snakes, the horse's splint bones with vestigial toes, the female Vapourer moth's vestigial wing-buds, the useless right ovary and oviduct in female birds, and, as an example from the plant world, the fifth stamen of the common figwort. All these are inexplicable unless the bearer descended from some forerunner to whom they were useful.

Man's body is itself quite a museum of evolution. A German anatomist, Wiedersheim, has estimated 180 vestigial organs in man, wholly, or almost wholly, useless, though useful to previous forms of life. Among the most popularly known vestiges are body hair, scalp and ear muscles (the latter also a useless feature of the Great Apes). Sometimes the vestiges can be definite hindrances, an even more telling criticism of the Creator's skill and intelligence. For instance, the early human embryo has nostrils connected with the mouth by a deep groove on either side. Sometimes, through a failure of development, this condition remains throughout life, and we call it hare lip. It is a reminiscence of the way in which the nostrils were formed in our early fish-like ancestors; compare the dog-fish and skate. Again, pre-natal hair can persist, giving "dog-faced" humans. Babies are sometimes born with a little pink tail; closure of the gill-clefts, arrested, gives actual slits in the side of the neck, or white patches in the skin, and these by no means exhaust the examples, each a nail in the coffin of the archetype theory. Many other instances of physiological disharmony are contained in Metchnikoff's *Nature of Man*.

The embryological researches of Von Baer, and more particularly of Haeckel, add their testimony, and this is not invalidated by the fact that the three just mentioned are now in several respects considered out of date. "A child of two," says *The Science of Life*, "can tell a pig from a man, a hen from a monkey, an elephant from a snake. But these animals are only



easy to tell apart in the later stages of their development. When they were early embryos they were all so alike that not merely the average man, but the average biologist, would not be able to distinguish them."

It is sometimes objected, as against the argument from embryological recapitulation, that some stages are nearly always missing, and the gaps filled by nothing more substantial than the embryologist's imagination. Yet the incompleteness must be expected to become more marked as no biological service is rendered by such recapitulation.

The artificial production of species, a feat only of recent years, really gives the death blow to the theory of any extra-natural origin. In this connexion Haldane quotes<sup>1</sup> the success of Muntzing in obtaining from *galeopsis specioza* and *galeopsis pubescens*, of the same species, an entirely new species in *g. tetralit*. And while the scientist cannot change marsupials into monkeys, geology shows that evolution has had countless ages at its disposal. As Haldane remarks, "The gap between species is bridged not only by evolution in the past, but in some cases at any rate by hybridization in the present."<sup>2</sup>

To use the expression of Wells and Huxley, evolution is "proven up to the hilt," in such a manner that there is no room for sidetracking or compromise. An anachronism such as the skull of a lion or horse in the early coal measures, or a human tooth in a coal seam, would be most destructive, but they do not happen, and the corroborative accumulation of evidence from the various sources furnishes ample grounds for asserting that the general theory is indestructible.

Nor will it do to suspend judgment on the ground of geological uncertainties. Different layers of the earth's crust can be arranged in a definite time sequence in a far more satisfactory way than was possible to Kelvin and his contemporaries. The age of rocks can be most reliably based on the analysis of radioactive minerals. The discovery of radium (Curie, 1898) was the starting point for researches which have enabled us to chronicle the history of mother earth.

Radioactive elements shoot out particles of matter from their atoms, and thus transform into different elements in such a way as to become effectual chronometers. The parent of radium is uranium, which, by emitting 3 atoms of helium and several electrons, becomes radium. The latter can then discharge a gas, radium emanation, and finally, after losing 5 helium atoms, become lead. The latter, having stable atoms, does not continue the process of disintegration, which, let it be noted, is timed and not haphazard. Thus, one milligram of radium after 1700 years would, according to mathematical calculation, have only one half left, the rest having turned into helium-lead and the intervening traces. Uranium, a slow disintegrator, would take 4,500 million years to lose half its content; other radioactive elements have also their own particular rate of metamorphosis. We can thus calculate precisely how long it would take for any given proportion of lead to be accumulated in a mineral containing uranium or thorium. According to J. B. S. Haldane, "Analyses of rocks show nothing older than about 1,500 million years. The helium in meteorites agrees with an upper limit of 2,000 million years for their age" (*ibid*). Calculations regarding the orbit of Mars, a sister planet, are corroborative.

Geological deposits have yielded not only fossils but also primitive tools and implements. Prehistoric archaeology, says Prof. V. G. Childe (author of *Man Makes Himself*) takes a prominent part "in the disproof of the old idea of the 'Fall' of man, which has for so long been a dogma of Christian belief. It has

now been clearly demonstrated that man has slowly arisen from savagery to civilization." Confronted with the facts of geology and palæontology, some of the theistic arguments have been amusing. Gosse stated that fossils appear in the rocks because God put them there to test our faith. On this line of argument all our history books could record events that never happened, including scriptural events, and Russell's *reductio ad absurdum* is that everything came into existence five minutes ago. (This would also involve the supposition that Edmund Gosse and the Plymouth Brethren never existed).

We may legitimately suppose, in spite of Gosse and of the Bishop (Ussher) who gave the year, date and time of the earth's creation, that it is roughly 2,000 million years old; and besides the evidence from radioactivity we may enlist that from meteorites, from the eccentricity of the earth's orbit and from the recession of the spiral nebulae.

The further plea that God has deliberately mixed up the geological strata does but raise doubt as to the intentions of the creator, since geology is in many ways a science most useful to man.

G. H. TAYLOR

## Damnation

"DAMNATION!" exclaims Bill McGrory, attired in corduroys to which, taking thought for the morrow, eleven trouser-buttons have been attached. He was unloading bricks and one had fallen on his toe. "Damnation" reads the venerable Dean or the pale-faced curate but, oh, in such different tones. It is clear that the very word has an objectionable significance to his sensitive ear. One can hardly hear it; and the accentuation is of such a quality as to provide the word with a first-class disguise. Yet of all religious words this perhaps has been the most potent. "Hell" runs it close, but then it is a first cousin. Ecclesiastically both have become words to apologize for. Clerics say they are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but some parts of that Gospel they only display when they must.

It was not ever thus. The word was perhaps the commonest in medieval times, when Christianity had colossal power and opportunity. Not only that, but it survived better than any other Christian dogma the internecine wars of the Creed Boosters. On Damnation they were agreed more than on anything else. There was no shy note in its presentation. All knew its value. It kept the communicant possessed of what the Romanist calls a "wholesome fear." And as far as their coffers were concerned—even the spiritual realm must have cash to give it potency—it was invaluable.

But now it is different. "Damnation," it is claimed, has to be correctly defined. The words *fire*, *flames*, *hot*, *burning*, the words that were used in its definition, also badly need defining. Fiddle-de-dee! Fire is one of the elements and the word itself is elementary. Little Baby Bunting puts his finger curiously into the candle flame; he finds it burning; he finds it hot. He never presses, when he comes to years of maturity, for a definition of these terms. Artemus Ward may have had some difficulty in defining an elephant, but he knew one when he saw one. Hell and Damnation, when young Bunting got a good sound Christian education, were plain convincing terms.

At Highbury Corner a speaker reads the words of Jesus in the last chapter of Mark to the effect that those who believe not shall be damned. "Con-

<sup>1</sup> *Science and the Supernatural*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences*.



condemned" shouts a Catholic in the crowd. No Protestant version for him! He thinks the word "condemnation" a lighter and gentler word than "damnation." Is it? If a man is condemned for an eternity in the lake of fire and brimstone, he would just as soon be damned.

When the great Christian Councils met in the earlier centuries of Christianity, a great objective was the crushing out of heresy. The Pelagians, the Waldenses, the Albigenses, the Nestorians, for example, were *condemned*. Did this mean they were denied the Beatific Vision? Did being condemned by the Holy Mother Church amuse the heretics a little; did they say to themselves, philosophically, "Ah, time will show. The Lord knows all about *filioque*. He knows whether the Holy Ghost emanated from the Father, or the Son, or from both of them. We will leave the matter quietly in his hands. We can afford to wait." No, they ran like scalded cats. For Holy Mother Church believed not only that God burnt heretics for differences of opinion such as the *filioque* issue; they believed they should give God some assistance. God would enhance the value of their Beatific Vision, if they burnt and slew the wicked heretic. They girded on their armour and endeavoured to root out the heretics, men, women and children. So that God when they arrived before the Throne would say to them "Well Done, good and faithful servant; enter now into the Joy of your Lord. Peter! PETER! Serve up the Beatific Vision and be quick about it."

Call it what you like, reverend gentlemen, Hell and Damnation are going to be deucedly unpleasant. Even Dean Farrar would have admitted that. To attempt to soften the crudities by changing the words is typical Christian hypocrisy. The Oracles of God should be as untouchable as the Box which contained the shewbread, a few stones, and Jehovah himself, The Ark of the Lord! It is as well a dangerous piece of work. For he who taketh away the word of the Lord by one jot or tittle is in for something at which the imagination staggers.

The ecclesiastical trump-card, Excommunication, had its value as a terror-producer—Monarchs did not tremble because they were to be deprived of the Beatific Vision, they did so because they thought they were going to be burnt and that eternally. The *Universe* is being made to struggle just now with the question, Why doesn't the Pope excommunicate Hitler? We venture an answer. It is that excommunication nowadays would make so many of the educated smile, both wanly and broadly, that the Holy Mother Church is not prepared to face this reaction. The Glory that was Greece and the Grandeur that was Rome are things of the past, and the Thunders that were Rome suggest an awkward comparison.

It is a great thing that theologians have become ashamed of Hell and Damnation. No more hideous, no more degrading dogma could be conceived by the human mind. No-one who really believed in it could draw any joy from this earthy existence. All would be blighted by the vision of the Damned. Christianity can never be forgiven for that contribution to human happiness. It would take enormous benefits to outweigh that one evil, and those benefits even when sought for by the eye of faith are microscopic in comparison.

In the future, when Christianity takes its place amongst the multitudes of religions, it will be known and estimated as the Hell and Damnation Religion. The student of comparative religion will have no difficulty in realizing that this is its real contribution to social betterment. Everything else fades into existence before this one great fact.

Good it is nowadays that the favourite method of using the terms "Hell" and "Damnation" is as an

expletive. Splendid it is that the terror is fleeing from men's minds. Evidence there is in plenty. But one can find a splendid illustration from the life of Channing. He was taken as a child to hear a Calvinistic sermon. Let us quote the words of Hubert Handley, the author of *The Fatal Opulence of Bishops*:—

The preacher did his work thoroughly. The sunlight of life retreated at his word; clouds blew up from the horizon; the spiritual landscape became first overcast, then awful with a storm of woe and judgment; most of mankind appeared to be lost in the havoc. The child was frightened. William, for his part, supposed that henceforth those who believed would abandon all earthly things to seek salvation, and that amusement and earthly business would no longer occupy a moment. The service over, they went out of church. . . . A heavy weight fell on his heart. He wanted to speak to his father; he expected his father would speak to him in relation to this tremendous crisis of things. They got into the chaise and rode along, but, absorbed in awful thoughts, he could not raise his voice. Presently his father began to whistle! At length they reached home; but instead of calling the family together, and telling them of the appalling intelligence which the preacher had given, his father took off his boots, put his feet upon the mantelpiece, and quietly read a newspaper. All things went on as usual. At first he was surprised; but, not being given to talking, he asked no explanations. Soon, however, the question rose—"Could what he had heard be true? No, his father did not believe it; people did not believe it! It was *not* true!" He felt that he had been trifled with.

Pinamonti and Furness, those eloquent Catholic describers of Hell's Torments for Children were then trifling with us. If these Holy Gentlemen were not trifling, then all the more sure we can be that it was in this Infamous Dogma that Christianity made its really individual contribution of consequence to Civilization. Hell and Damnation!

T. H. ELSTON

## Acid Drops

Now that the clergy are shrieking themselves hoarse with the cry that this war is due to our forgetting God, it may be as well to recall a statement made by Mr. Lloyd George in the *Daily Express* for June 25, 1930. Speaking of the 1914 war, in which he played so prominent a part, he said:—

The last war was made by monarchs and statesmen and warriors who were all Christians. It was not the Atheists, the Infidels, the Agnostics. It was Christian ministers, Christian Kings and Emperors, and Christian Generals—professed Christians.

All the same, the clergy had the same cry then as now—it was our forgetting God that was responsible for the war. Well, the clergy can make no complaint that God has lacked attention since the war commenced. And every time he has been specifically invoked to give a hand something bad has happened to the Allies. As we have before suggested, the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury might order a day of national prayer for Germany. It might help us.

We suppose it is because Saturday is the day before Sunday, and Sunday is the festival-day for Christian absurdity, that so many columns of religious nonsense appear in the Saturday newspapers. It is a kind of "dope" served out in order to provide a proper frame of mind for listening to the official absurdities of a Sunday sermon. So it happens that the gentleman who provides the Saturday "dope" for the readers of the *Times* reminds us



at the opening of his Saturday sermon, that the "collect" for the next day has in it, "O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things in heaven and earth." We do not know how things are in heaven; perhaps the war of four hundred millions of people in the East has been arranged by God to provide entertainment for the denizens in heaven. Some entertainment in that direction used to be provided by the saved looking down on the sinners burning in hell; but that place has been so improved of recent years that probably the people there are now objects of envy to those who have to spend their time in the Christian heaven.

The *Times* writer serves out the weekly dose thus, "It is evident that God does not prevent the evil deeds of men from achieving their natural results." In that case, what does God do? And what is the use of praying to him? What is the use of these days of prayer, asking God to do this, or that, in answer to the prayers offered? When, before Munich, we had a whole fortnight's continuous prayer, with Mrs. Chamberlain as an advertised attendant, to God, and Mr. Chamberlain thanking God for having, through him, brought "peace in our time," were people praying merely to have events take their natural course? Events would have done that in any case. The explanation of this is that God "makes no moral distinction between those who are struggling having made men free. He can do nothing to influence the character of their actions." Again, what is the use of praying to God for help if he can do nothing to influence events? For sheer unadulterated nonsense this weekly dose of religion beats anything we have come across. What sort of an audience is it the *Times* caters for? For educated people, probably, but quite obviously, so far as its religion is concerned, for the most stupid section of the community.

So we venture to suggest a prayer that should be said by the Christian readers of the *Times* :—

O, Lord we pray thee to help us and give us strength in this the day of our trial. We know that thou canst do nothing at all, that thou canst neither alter our desires, nor the consequences of our actions, nor displace bad actions by good ones, nor change our bad intentions and misjudgments for good actions and sound judgments. Nevertheless we pray to thee to help us, trusting that you will behave as thou hast always done, and when we have muddled through as best we may, without thy help that we may retain enough muddle-headedness to have days of solemn thanksgiving so that the Church and the clergy will be able to say that victory would never have been vouchsafed us had we not thought like the lowly ass and behaved so as to keep belief in thy power and mercy alive.

Cardinal Hinsley appears to be a little upset over the statement that the Pope is favouring the Petain—that is the German—Government of France. He does not deny it, he is too artful for that, as he may presently have to admit its truth. He says the reports do not bear the "hall-mark of the Holy See." But the hall-mark of the Church, is, as we have so often pointed out, to fall into line with my form of Government that does not threaten opposition to Rome. And our artful Cardinal finishes with :—

It is clear to us all that we are fighting the age-long struggle for the freedom of Christ and of Christianity against violence and tyranny. It is therefore my privilege to assert our undivided loyalty, both to our ancient faith and to this our native land.

As Cardinal Hinsley, as a Roman Catholic priest, holds that the existence of a State education in which religion—usually the Roman religion—is not taught is an act of tyranny and injustice towards the Church, one would much like to have a detailed explanation of these words. And as for his loyalty to "our ancient faith and to this our native land," he knows full well, that this means no more than that as a priest he is loyal to Roman Catholicism, and that, as a priest, he would be bound to oppose this "native land" if it threatened the security of the foreign Church to which he yields unquestioning obedience.

We wonder whether Cardinal Hinsley would quite openly and plainly brand Mussolini for what he is? We doubt it. Mussolini has bought the Papacy, and Cardinal Hinsley must be careful not to make any slighting reference to the Italian bully.

We can imagine President Roosevelt sticking his tongue in his cheek when he recently announced that Congress had devoted a thousand million dollars for the purchase of aeroplanes, and finished by saying that this was characteristic of "a people who had put their faith in God." The President had a pretty wit. No Atheist could have put it better.

But we also have some interesting exhibits. Thus, outside of St. Paul's, Portman Square, was recently hung the notice, "What the Nation needs is not more men and not more machines—but God." All the same we are willing to wager that the minister of that Church has a prepared dug-out, and divers protections for the House of God in which he officiates. Probably the notice ought to read, "In the rush for more men and more machines don't forget *Us*."

Correspondence is appearing in the press to the effect that owing to the great value to the country of the Archbishop of Canterbury at this particular time, he should be prevailed upon for the nation's sake to go to some inland country retreat where he will be quite safe. If this particular high priest is agreeable in the sight of God, then one would think God could look after his own. But evidently a wicked belief is creeping into the Churches that "either he [God] is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened."

On the other hand, should we have to make the painful assumption that the Archbishop is not *persona grata* with the Deity, then we are afraid that Christians in this country must face up to the fact. Let His Grace hide wherever he likes God will find him. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God wherever you may happen to be, and we would also remind Christians of something of which they evidently need reminding, that "God is not mocked."

An air raid warning sounded somewhere on the South Coast during morning service on a recent Sunday. Immediately from one of the churches the whole congregation stampeded to the nearest air raid shelter. Their religion did not give them dignity of exit from the church, but with the prospect of falling enemy bombs they acted as sensibly as Freethinkers by seeking the best protection. God's help to Christians in ages past and hope for years to come might be all right in times of peace, but in an air raid fifteen inches of concrete overhead is considered a better proposition.

The latest theological work described by a pious reviewer as "a capital antidote for the anxieties and depression of the times," is *The Re-Creation of Man*, by T. M. Parker. The "antidote" is the perfectly original one of accepting Christ as the Redeemer. Christ is the "answer" to every problem. We expect that if the book had provided any other answer it would never have been accepted or published; so we congratulate Mr. Parker on his wonderful discovery.

*La Croix*, the French Catholic paper, has discovered why France was beaten. It appears that France had "driven God from the school and from the forum." She had "robbed our priests and our nuns." She had "stripped the Church and multiplied the places of evil, supported depraved literature, white slavery, profaned the Sunday and forgotten the Commandments. . . ." So, of course, God had his own back, and saw to it that France should come under the heel of a conqueror—what could one expect? Religion thrives on this fear and punishment business and *La Croix* is true to tradition. It is simply the awful wailings of Jeremiah modernized.

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# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- To Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—W. Hodges, 10s.; A. Humphreys, 2s. 6d.
- H. MORTIMER.—You will find a good outline of the subject in *The Emergence of Novelty*, by C. Lloyd Morgan, pub. 1933, price 7s. 6d. We deal with *Emergence* in our *Materialism Restated*.
- G. PRESCOTT.—Mr. Cohen has written you.
- D. GARLAND (Brisbane).—Pleased to hear that your *Freethinker* reaches you regularly. G. W. Foote's judgment on such a topic as you name would be certain to be humane and of considered value.
- L. WOODHEAD, W. W. SMITH.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.
- ANTHONY SCOTT.—Will take all good things you wish us and the compliments you pay us, for granted. With the help of such loyal readers we can face the future with equanimity.
- A. HUMPHREYS.—Unless the paper supply dries up absolutely, we shall be there at the end. If it does we must see what telepathy can do to transmit weekly budgets.
- W. B. LYDDON.—We have had several complaints of delay in receiving copies of the *Freethinker*. Copies leave this office every week at the same time and day. But there is certain to be some delay in transition under existing conditions. Where they do not arrive within a reasonable period, if subscribers will inform us we shall be pleased to send an extra copy.
- G. H. PEARE.—Your letter was mislaid. There is no reason, save in the desire of officials to conduct an inquisition—or in the case named, religious officiousness—why an official administering State relief should enquire about an applicant's religion. It is either impertinence, or impertinence plus bigotry.
- W. E. BULLOCK.—Thanks for your address. Also for your very flattering compliment on the work we have done and are doing.
- J. MOOSOF.—Aphorisms useful. Thanks.
- J. W. DAWSON.—We remember your father well. And our recollections of him are of the best. We shall be pleased to meet you any time you are in London. Your father was with us through all the Wood Green fights.
- LT.-COL. ROWLAND HILL.—The chapter and verse you require is *Romans* iii. 7. "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" There is also the Pauline confession in *2 Cor.* xii. 16: "Being crafty I caught you with guile." It is sometimes pleaded on behalf of Paul that the first of these utterances is not his own but that of a person with whom he was in controversy, but this apologia does not explain the second quotation. The second quotation in fact makes any such defence impossible. Catching with guile and mendacity are not necessarily the same thing, but are equally indefensible ethically.
- The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
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- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

## SPECIAL

WITH a view to meeting circumstances that may arise with a prolongation of the war, we should be greatly helped if each subscriber to the *Freethinker* would be good enough to send us his, or her, name and address. We refer only to those who procure their copies through newsagents. Those who order direct from the office have their addresses already on our books.

The circumstances we have in view may never arise, but it is well to be prepared for all kinds of difficulties. We have, so well as we can, guarded the future of the paper in many directions, and this suggestion represents the last contingency of which we can think—at the moment.

All that is required is just a name and an address on a postcard or in a letter. We shall know to what it refers. Our readers have assisted us so wilingly, and in so many directions, that we do not hesitate to ask this further help.

CHAPMAN COHEN

## Sugar Plums

We have space this week for only a brief reference to the speech of Lord Halifax, Foreign Secretary, broadcast on July 22. Two-thirds of the speech consisted of what are now mere common-places, delivered in a manner suggestive of an undertaker suffering from a trade slump. The remaining third was taken up by an exhibition of sheer bad taste that must have its origin in the lack of a sense of public responsibility. It was an appeal to the British public to pray, to form prayer groups, and to spend a portion of each day in prayer. Bearing in mind the opinions of large numbers of men in the British forces, a more disgraceful exhibition of using a public position to conduct a Christian propaganda has seldom been heard. We have no desire to rob Lord Halifax of any of his personal superstitions, or to prevent his airing them in the proper place. But no man with a proper sense of personal honesty and responsibility would use such an office as Foreign Secretary to carry on a narrow sectarian propaganda. Lord Halifax is not in office as a Christian. We may return to this subject next week.

Question asked by Mr. Thurtle in the House of Commons:—

Is the Right Hon. Gentleman aware that the effect upon the public mind of the lugubrious person who speaks every day at 7.55 a.m. is deplorable?

Mr. Duff Cooper, in reply:—

So far as I am aware, there has been no such reiteration on the wireless.

The reply is tricky, but untrue and misleading. We don't know who the person is who gives us this mournful, very religious, but completely idiotic wet blanket day after day, without the slightest variation in its stupidity. If anything is likely to weaken the war effort it is this introduction to the day. We have not heard a really good word for it, even from religious people. It is time it was abolished. This war will not be won by a daily crawl, but by a daily resolve to stand up.

Since the above was written a notice has been issued by Mr. Cooper that "there is no intention to form an army of dumb people, who are afraid to open their mouths about anything or to create a body of whispers." He says that "Keep it dark, means keep the enemy in the dark." If that is so Mr. Cooper has been much misrepresented. But we suggest he brings his influence to bear in the direction of wiping out the decree that imprisons old men for creating "despondency." If a man feels despondent let him air his despondency. That is the best way to get rid of it. To turn him into a hypocrite by his pretending to be hopeful is to manufacture a hypocrite. If we are to win this war (is that despond-



ency?) it will be by men and women who are too robust to be disturbed by one here and there who is despondent. This war should be fought by *men*, to make *men*, and to create a society fit for *men* to live in

In Germany one may be imprisoned if he does not look cheerful to order. Following in the track of that policy, comes the new criminal offence of speaking so as to cause despondency. Will someone explain the difference between being punished in Germany for not speaking cheerfully about the war, and being punished in Britain for speaking despondently about the war? Our dull brain is unable to discriminate. And as Mr. Duff Cooper sees nothing depressing in this daily seven-fifty-five disguised funeral address, nay, even encourages it, is he not liable to be summoned for tending to create despondency? We suggest that a question be asked in the House about it.

The one certain thing is that this war will not be won by crawling every morning, and crying to the world that we are poor weak things, and that unless God helps us we are certain to be defeated. And we believe that the number of "croakers" are so few that it is a disgrace to picture the British people as made of such poor stuff that they will be disheartened if someone whispers to them that the House of Commons has been undermined by German Agents, that the army is being served with cardboard guns, or Hitler has just landed an army in Brighton. As we said last week, this policy of teaching people to regard everyone of their neighbours as a possible enemy in the pay of Germany rouses suspicion and weakens. We have had many reports of people threatening others with police attention because they said something against the war. Our advice is, let them. The risk run in that way is far less than that of regarding everyone as a likely enemy. Real unity must rest upon conviction, not upon fear of three months imprisonment.

One is reminded of a prayer by an American parson during the civil war. "Oh God we pray thee that we may never feel contempt for our leaders. And, Oh God, we pray that they may never act so that we can't help doing so."

And let us take this as an indisputable political and social truth. There is nothing that will enable those who are so inclined to play the very devil with democratic institutions than by creating a feeling of distrust between citizens. The solidity of a democracy must always rest in the people, not in its administrative departments.

Not finding enough to do in these easy-going times, Mr. Cohen has written two new pamphlets for the *Pamphlets for the People* series. One is on *Agnosticism*, the other on *Atheism*. They will be published as soon as possible, but there is a little difficulty for the moment over the matter of paper. The price will be raised from one penny to three halfpence, but 16 pages for that amount is still very, very cheap, and many write us to say that the series is very, very useful. All that remains is to get the pamphlets into circulation among those who need them most.

Evidently a newcomer to this journal Mr. C. V. Clarke writes from Bedford, that he thinks we evidently "have an enquiring mind." We are overpowered by the compliment and, not to be outdone in courtesy, beg to compliment Mr. Clarke on the penetrating quality of his intellect.

A reader suggests that it is interesting to prepare an analysis of Christian faiths setting forth the claims of the rival spiritual hucksters to provide all with a safe road to heaven. He thinks it would be useful and interesting to point out that "true Christianity" varies from the acceptance of every word in the Bible to a position not very different from that set forth by Thomas Paine. The suggestion is worth bearing in mind.

## A New Rhymers' Club

[Note: The author of this study of a group of the writers and artists of to-day is himself a well-known novelist, who has occasionally contributed to our columns under his own name—ED.]

We are told by those who should know that the Elizabethan poets and dramatists met at the Mermaid. Dr. Johnson and his circle met, it is generally understood, at the Cheshire Cheese. In the nineties the Rhymers' Club, which included Ernest Dowson and a few other ill-starred poets of the period, found an inn a suitable central meeting-place. And there have doubtless been many other groups who have been criticized by our clerical friends, and who similarly assembled at different periods in the literary history of London. The group of writers of which I am going to write is more recent and less formal. Indeed, though many of its members have now disappeared from our midst owing to the twin demands of evacuation and the services, some of us still meet occasionally and wag wise heads over the evils of the time. We have, however, no minute books and no fixed times of meeting. It is just chances that a wine-bar in Holborn has become a convenient centre for several of the younger writers and artists of the day. There they meet and (as is the habit of writers and artists) talk "shop" over a glass of sherry or burgundy. Until quite recent years, I should perhaps add, an inn off St. Martin's Lane was the usual rendezvous of our group; but, as is the habit of these loosely-constructed assemblies, we have moved on.

Who comprises the group? Well, there are several figures whose work will be familiar to most readers. It was at the wine-bar that I first met Herbert Palmer, that erstwhile Methodist, who was thoughtfully munching sandwiches and drinking burgundy, glaring over his glasses meanwhile and laying down the law on the respective merits and demerits of certain modern English poets. Palmer is by no means a regular attendant at these discussions; his residence, well out of London, causes him to visit Holborn but rarely. We have our regular poet, however, in John Gawsworth, a Benson Medallist of the Royal Society of Literature and, in the opinion of most of us, one of the most under-appreciated poets of the day. His slim figure, untidy hair, and ragged beard, frequently grown and as frequently shaved off again, may be often descried in one of the little "cubby-holes" at the wine-bar, occupied long ago by his distant kinsman, Lionel Johnson. And in the old days of three or four years ago (what an age ago that now seems!) another young poet, more unorthodox in his prosody than Gawsworth, used to attend the tavern off St. Martin's Lane. This was Dylan Thomas, whose fair, curly hair provided a strange contrast to the sombre visage of Augustus John, with whom he once put in an appearance, much to everyone's delight. Another occasional attendant is Randall Swingler, and no one in the country rejoiced more than we did when that clever poet scored a sudden success with his novel, *To Town*, published not long ago. Swingler, like Shakespeare's Cassius, has "a lean and hungry look," and is, one feels, admirably suited to portray (as he did in his novel) the lives of those unfortunates who have been compelled by fate, or some flaw in our economic system, to fight a battle against almost overwhelming odds.

Then there is Charles Duff, that urbane, polished Irishman who is one of Britain's greatest linguists. I remember the occasion when he brought along a Spanish sailor, who informed us that Duff could not merely speak Spanish like a native—"he can speak my dialect of Spanish like a native, as if I were to



speak to you in the Lancashire dialect." Duff is probably better known to the general public for his *Handbook of Hanging* and *This Human Nature*, both of which books have been widely praised, and have sold thousands of copies, but he is a man of many talents, and has done so many things in his day that I must ask readers to await his autobiography, *Round the Rainbow*, which is due out any day now.

We have other more occasional visitors from Ireland. The massive, serious figure of Austin Clarke puts in an appearance when he is in London, sometimes accompanied by Seamas O'Sullivan, the editor of the *Dublin Magazine*, and himself a poet of considerable dimensions, though one doubts whether the waiters who serve him with wine or whiskey ever think that this bluff, hearty, pipe-smoking man could possibly be the author of some of the most delightful poetry from a land of poets.

And who else? Well, there is a little, unassuming man whom I consider one of the few real masters of English prose in our day. According to Miss Naomi Jacob, who presented a neat portrait of him in her *Me: A Book about Other People*, he looks rather like a schoolmaster. But actually he is Thomas Burke, author of *Limehouse Nights*, a book which was published in the darkest days of the last war, and which has since sold more thousands than most of us hope to sell hundreds. Yet Burke (whose *Book of the Inn* will probably be familiar to many readers of this journal) has written many books which are far more noteworthy—and his recent *Living in Bloomsbury* is one of the most delightful works of rambling literary causerie that have appeared for years. It is, I think, comparable only to Arthur Machen's *Things Near and Far* and *Far-Off Things*. Machen himself does not grace our company with his dignified presence, though some of us visit him on occasion.

One of the most striking personalities in all our company is A. F. Tschiffely of the famous ride. On his most recent visit to the wine-bar he had interesting things to tell of conditions in France, where, under the stimulating tutelage of E.N.S.A., he had been talking to the troops of his travels. Tschiffely is a broad-shouldered man of pleasant aspect, and his command of several languages is probably the reason why he is frequently to be seen sharing a private joke in some obscure tongue with Charles Duff.

Artists we also have. Frederick Carter, expert on symbolism, friend of D. H. Lawrence, and eminent etcher and water-colour painter, occasionally produces some slice of almost Hogarthian satire on the petty doings of the great. And Nina Hamnett, though we do not see much of her nowadays, was at one time a member of our inner circle—though she always had the disconcerting habit of vanishing suddenly and turning up, hours later, at some other tavern—usually within the mysterious borderlands of Bloomsbury and Soho.

One of the most vital (if that word be permitted) of all the personalities of this new Rhymers' Club is Philip Lindsay, that medieval born out of due time. Some eager reader of Lindsay's early novel about Marlowe, *One Dagger for Two*, said that the author had dressed himself and his friends in Elizabethan costumes, and provided a period picture of what we might all have been like had we been living 350 or 400 years earlier. Be that as it may, the fact remains that Lindsay, with his delightful trace of Australian accent and his astonishing command of historical detail, is probably more in demand than anyone else in the crowd of which I am writing.

Then we are sometimes honoured by the visit of a handsome, bronzed man who looks as if he has stepped straight from the pages of one of those over-romanticized novels which most of us tend to regard with such

contempt. Yet Eric Muspratt—for he it is—has written travel books which have attracted wide attention, and is probably the member of our circle who has travelled most recklessly of us all, and roughed it in almost every country in the world.

Kenneth Hare is another writer of varied talents, whose work will be well known to readers of these pages. His rather stocky figure is not often seen, for he has chosen to bury himself in a Cotswold village, from which he emerges at infrequent intervals to amuse and entertain us with his reminiscences of 1914-1918.

Some members of the group, once regular in their attendance, have of course been dispersed by the fortunes of war. I am unable to attend as regularly as once I did, since the firm for which I perform various editorial duties has seen fit to evacuate itself to the green and pleasant English countryside. Others have taken up more active work with the armed forces. Hamish McLaren, for instance, the author of *Cockalorum*, is now somewhere with the British Fleet, though it seems oddly incongruous that the author of some of the daintiest lyrics of recent years should be a Lieutenant-Commander. But it would seem (as I noted when speaking of Seamas O'Sullivan) that poetry is written by the most surprising people. Anna Wickham, for instance, is a tall, massive woman whom one could imagine as a policewoman in uniform or even (without too daring a stretch of the imagination) as a cook-general; but she has written some of the most delicately-turned poems of our time, and her appearances (also rare in these days) are always greeted with a hearty cheer.

One or two past members of the club have left this world for ever, and I gladly take an opportunity of saluting their memory. Such was Edgar Jepson, one of the greatest of light novelists, and a member of the original Rhymers' Club. And such—to take a very different example—was Gwyn Evans, that slim Welshman, who frequently contributed in the *Freethinker*, and whose death a year or two ago robbed the young admirers of Sexton Blake of one of their favourite authors.

One of the most remarkable facts about this group, however, is that there are few elderly men. On occasion one or more of us may visit some of the older masters of literature or art, paying them a deferential compliment, but rarely do they return it. M. P. Shiel, for instance, is a regular correspondent of more than one of us. This strange man, living in Sussex in a little square bungalow surrounded by a wilderness of garden, seems to many like a survivor of an earlier age. And to see him, dressed in his velvet smoking-jacket, preparing with meticulous care a strange concoction made largely of gin, whiskey, and port, which is his favourite cocktail, is to be transported at one bound back to the 'nineties.

I have been fortunate also in occasionally meeting Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Eden Phillpotts, and other of the mighty figures, but they are not regular company for such as ourselves. We are merely a group of young men who are endeavouring to do something with our chosen material, whether that material be paint or words.

There have been even one or two actors who have graced our company with their presence. Ion Swinley, that magnificent speaker of verse, was naturally to be seen in our circle, and no one lamented his untimely death more than we did. John Oxford, whose magnificent burlesque in *Young England* has recently won him new plaudits, was at one time a regular attendant at our gatherings, and various other figures well known on stage and screen have from time to time drunk a glass or two of wine with us.

Some journalists too join us when their duties per-



mit. Barbara Armstrong, one-time social editress of a London daily paper, now attends in the uniform of the A.F.S. Will Farrow, Australian cartoonist and regular contributor to many journals, is another who seems to have been separated from us by the war situation.

Now let me sum up. What names have I mentioned? Herbert Palmer, John Gawsworth, Dylan Thomas, Augustus John, Randall Swingler, Charles Duff, Austin Clarke, Seamas O'Sullivan, Thomas Burke, A. F. Tschiffely, Frederick Carter, Nina Hammett, Philip Lindsay, Eric Muspratt, Kenneth Hare, Hamish Maclaren, Anna Wickham, Edgar Jepson, Gwyn Evans, Ion Swinley, John Oxford, Barbara Armstrong, and Will Farrow. They make a motley company, and, with the single exception of Augustus John (who very rarely attended the tavern off St. Martin's Lane, and never, as far as I know, the wine-bar in Holborn), there is not one who would be regarded by the general public as being a figure of the first importance in his particular branch of the arts. Perhaps I should say that there is none who is yet regarded as being in the front rank. And there lies the real reason for those random reminiscences. Among our number there may well be someone who is destined—the war permitting—to be a great figure in the poetry or painting or fiction of the next fifty years or so. If so, this brief survey of our activities will be abundantly justified.

Who would not give much for the most trivial gossip of the Mermaid Tavern in Shakespeare's day? Boswell has given us something of the flavour of the Cheshire Cheese in the time of Dr. Johnson. I do not claim to be a Boswell, nor do I suggest that those of whom I have written are of the importance assigned to the Elizabethan dramatists. Nevertheless the public may find some little interest in this brief sketch of the way in which a group of people met and drank and talked in a wine-bar in London. It is a picture largely of an untidy, informal literary and artistic group of the nineteen-thirties. My only hope is that the nineteen-forties may find our ranks unbroken, our heads perhaps bloody but still unbowed.

S.H.

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## Modern Franksteins

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It is a mere platitude to say that the present sorry state of international affairs is due, in the first place, to contending mental influences which ultimately find their expression in physical force, but that fact is not so equally obvious to all those who are engaged in the struggle.

From the dawn of civilization down to date men have fought, desperately, first for one thing and then for another, and it is undoubtedly correct to say that fighting will continue until the end of time—with this proviso: there is likely to be a change in the weapons of warfare. Maybe, as the world grows older and bloodshed becomes more abhorrent, mankind will prefer the ballot box to the bullet: Maybe!

In days gone by the great majority of men comprising an army fought without having the least idea what they were fighting for—or rather, what the fight was about: they took up arms either because they were "pressed" men—i.e., men pressed against their will into the service of the combatant—or as a congenial occupation, or, alternatively, for loot which often came the way of the earlier warriors. In the mind of the combatant himself and his immediate associates there was, naturally, a fixed idea of what he was after when he set out to do battle, but the bulk of the men

under his control were more or less thoughtless automata: they were told that the men on the other side of the ditch were their deadly enemies, out to destroy them, and there was therefore only one thing to do—i.e., to be the first in the field and annihilate them and all their kith and kin. Exterminate the vermin, was the war cry!

But those conditions no longer obtain—at any rate to the same extent. It is true that the enemy at our gate has persuaded his followers, or the great majority of them, that we are the scum of the earth and must be treated as such—a condition of mind brought about, as everyone knows, by persistent propaganda and regimentation. Without in the least degree deceiving ourselves—or, as the man of old did, thanking God that we are not as other men are—we can truthfully say that we, as a nation, are not so blinded to the truth. We know full well, and without having to be educated along these lines, that we are struggling might and main to preserve those things which alone make life worth living, and our fighting men are convinced of the justice of their cause. Hence the spirit which animates us all.

Of course, the present conflict is not due to any one cause, but to many causes, and it has its roots in the remote past—as all conflicts have, however much we may persuade ourselves, when we are in an aggressive mood and therefore temporarily unbalanced, that the affair is of recent growth. Nothing in the world dates from yesterday or the day before, but in the majority of cases goes back through the ages.

Viewed dispassionately and from afar we may say that the world is in its present unsettled state because of what has gone before: it is the culmination—the natural result—of past events, a countless number of them, some great, some small, but all contributory. And we are at the dawn of a new era. That is obvious.

No one can foretell what the outcome will be—save that, if we go the right way to work, we shall come out on top—but in the meantime cherished ideals are falling thick and fast. That is as clear as daylight. Old-fashioned precepts and practices are going by the board—never, apparently, to return; and one wonders whether that pertinent fact is fully and properly appreciated by those in high places. Evidently it is not; evidently some fail to see that the established order of things is being challenged and tumbling down around them—the whole affair is, unquestionably, the negation of both God and Mammon—and very few, if any, of those responsible in this matter appreciate that by the methods which they employ they are, actually, creating the very thing which they set out to destroy. Yes, there are several Franksteins walking the earth to-day. . . .

Let us be quite frank and fair in this matter. No man is his own creator or the sole author of his own acts; on the contrary; he is what he is by virtue of his birth and upbringing, and the countless influences which have been brought to bear upon him when in power—he is, in other words, the product of a certain set of conditions—so that eventually he becomes worthy of his creed. Just that and nothing more; and the only thing to do—the only thing that can be done to have any real and lasting effect—is to strive to change the conditions which gave birth to such objectionable people.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN

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You cannot put it out of a philosopher's head that the punishment of a creature being continued for an hundred thousand millions of ages successively is inconsistent with the infinite goodness of the creator.—Peter Bayle.



## "Old Nobodaddy Aloft"

"God the Father" of the Christians is the same as Yahuh, Yah, Jah or Jehovah, the Jewish god, who is held up as being a "God of infinite Wisdom, Justice and Love," by uncultivated, uneducated and ignorantly-read persons, who have never read their Old Testament to see what he was really like in his morals according to the text, and cannot think straight in any case. One would not gather this from an actual reading of the Bible, so that these people take the character of their god on trust from deceiving priests. I will say nothing about the lay ignoramuses who are taken in by this tomfoolery, but it is truly astonishing that the more educated members of our population, and in a country that is supposed to be one of the most civilized in the world, cannot see their own unscientific credulity in believing such childish stories as we find in the Old Testament, showing such ungod-like stupidity, injustice, hatred and filthiness, which are really nothing more than Jewish nursery tales, on the same mental level as those of Grimm or Hans Andersen; yet upon these the whole of their idiotic oriental theology is based. We are told over and over again that we are a "great people," and I believe this to be true: but I also believe that we are great in spite of all that Christianity has done to prevent it, and not on account of that survival of a primitive outlook on the Universe, based on faith, credulity and superstition.

Perhaps the best description of the true character of Nobodaddy, as portrayed in the Christian Bible, is to be found in the work of that great poet and painter, William Blake. He writes:—

Then old Nobodaddy aloft  
—and belch'd and cough'd,  
And said, "I love hanging and drawing and quartering  
"Every bit as well as war and slaughtering.  
Damn praying and singing,  
Unless they will bring in  
The blood of ten thousand by fighting or swinging."

Although Nobodaddy is supposed to be everywhere at once, yet he is supposed by "believers" to hang out in a place that the Christians call "Heaven," but Science has never been able to discover where this is, and Christians do not know its location themselves, when they are tackled on this point. There is an astronomical heaven, generally called by astronomers "the heavens," which consists of the blue expanse surrounding the earth. But Christians, in their gross ignorance of Nature, adopted the theory of the Pagans or "heathens" before them (that they affected, and still do affect, to despise so much because these gentry do not believe in the "Right God"), of a locality called "Heaven" and "Paradise," the ordinary Greek word for a park or a garden shaded with trees, in the clouds, the supposed residence of the deity, and the "blissful seat" of sanctified souls. One would imagine that they would be rather hard up for trees there, did one not know, through faith, that they have "spiritual trees" up there, whatever those may be. Most elementary schoolteachers know a little Science, and they know that all this stuff about God and Heaven is absolute bunk, but they are not supposed to let the wretched children in the nation's schools know it, because clergymen and bishops approaching "the kindergarten class in world-knowledge" know for certain that the "Foundations of Morality of the Lower Orders" would be irretrievably undermined if the poor kids ever came to know any plain scientific facts about God and heaven. It is a great pity that these ignorant clerics, who live on mental filth as flies live on the droppings of horses,

and who mix up an idiotic belief in spooks with the science of social behaviour, cannot keep quiet.

The ancients thought the earth was flat, immovable, and surrounded by water. They imagined that the gods sat on thrones somewhere in the clouds when not otherwise engaged (for in the old days gods were supposed to fix dates with swell dames on earth), judging the dead, rewarding those with whom they were pleased by perpetual feasting, boozing and rejoicing, and condemning those with whom they were angry to eternal burning (a quite impossible process) in hell-fire—hell being another imaginary place, whatever Jesus Christ may have taught about its reality. It was from the aforementioned throne in Heaven that Nobodaddy came hurrying down to earth, although he was supposed to be everywhere simultaneously, to issue his curses when Adam and Eve partook of the fruit which was to give them a "knowledge of good and evil." Did you ever hear such absolute nonsense? It was unjust of Jah to punish two people for doing something which he allowed them to do when he could have easily prevented them from doing it if he had not wanted them to do it, and it was more unjust and idiotic of him still, to curse the ground, snakes, future generations and what-have-you for his own hopeless bungling, and yet there are criminal lunatics who are still ramming this piffle into infants as if it were unquestionable truth and there are a large number of mentally flat-footed "flats," who believe that they believe this stuff in adult life!

It is absolutely absurd to conceive that human passions, such as anger, cruelty, obscenity, jealousy and pity (which are human qualities) can be attributed to the "Power" the Christians call God, who is not only believed to be without body or brain, but also to pervade the infinity of space as a sufficiently powerful stink might. But then, this would not worry my good Christian "brothers," as they have never been taught to use their brains properly, nor have they even grasped the idea of Scientific Thinking. As Chapman Cohen very pertinently says: "There are plenty of students of science, but very few scientific students." In addition to these difficulties, the "believer" also suffers heavily from the fact that his thinking powers, if any, have been thoroughly messed-up in his tender years by the ignorant ministrations of parents, egged-on by the criminal fifth-column activities of parasitical priests. But if we can save our children from the mental clutches of the priest, then we shall save them from belief in Nobodaddy and his Heaven and Hell.

DONALD DALE

## Correspondence

JESUS CHRIST

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I believe that there is much more in common between Jesus Christ and yourself, than a mere refutation of the religion into which you were born. That is why I regret your use of a brilliant pen to disparage the personality and teaching of this memorable man. No ethic, no philosophy, can endure the passage of two thousand years, unless it has contributed something to the sum total of human awareness. If the social policy of Jesus Christ may be dismissed as a few "vague generalities and common-places," one cannot deny that he gave the world a great new concept of which the Greek and Roman helot civilizations, magnificent though they were, and even superior in certain ways, were quite incapable: he proclaimed the innate and profound dignity of the common



man and the worth of the human personality. If one forgets everything else that Christ ever said or did, one cannot forget, or minimise, this. It persists. For this, he was crucified. For this idea, simple working men have been moved to upset tyranny, even when, more often than not, that tyranny has been supported by a debased Christian Church. For this, those philosophical standard-bearers of Germanic culture, Nietzsche and Hegel, were forced to attack his teaching. And for this we are fighting our finest battle to-day.

Jesus Christ was not a divinity: but he was as certainly not a personality of mean and petty stature. Mr. Cohen has allowed himself to be inordinately provoked by a discredited, sob-sister columnist, who was acclaiming, only recently, Mosley, as the future saviour of England. Were Christ alive to-day, I feel convinced that he would be fighting the same battle for human dignity and decency, as Mr. Cohen; and with, at least as much, gusto!

ROY BOULTING

### INSINCERITY

SIR,—Reverting to the question of "fair play," referred to in your correspondence column of the 14th inst., from the leaders of the Established State Church of England, or for that matter of any other church, does anyone expect fair play from those sources?

Not likely so long as huge salaries depend upon the ignorance of their supporters.

For many years I have credited the so-called higher clergy as not being so ignorant, but that they know their doctrines to be founded on falsity: doctrines which for themselves in their heart of hearts they do not accept.

Cases could be cited where subterfuge of the meanest kind is resorted to for the purpose of obtaining money from people living in the gross darkness that covers the face of the earth, too lengthy for this correspondence.

"Of all the evil spirits abroad at this hour in the world *insincerity* is the most dangerous. This above all to your own self be true and it will follow as the night the day you can not then be false to any man."

CINE CERE

## National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JULY 18, 1940

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Hornibrook, Bryant, Preece, Seibert, Ebury, Silvester, Griffiths, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, Mrs. Buxton and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly financial statement presented.

New members were admitted to Kingston, West London, and Parent Society. Following the resolution passed at the Annual Conference the dissolving of the Birkenhead Branch N.S.S. was confirmed, those members who have requested to join headquarters were readmitted, other correspondence in connexion was read. The receipt of a gift of £100 to the funds of the Society, and a legacy of £181 were announced, also pending legacies under two other wills noted. Delegates from the Executive reported on preliminary meetings for the formation of a Radio Freedom League. Correspondence from South London, Cambridge and Wigan was dealt with.

The Executive accepted with much appreciation the gift from Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner of the arm-chair used by Charles Bradlaugh.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary

Christianity, in common with Buddhism, teaches a thorough cult of poverty and mendacity; this is counteracted by intellectual culture proceeding from quite another source.—H. T. Buckle.

## Freethinkers and the Forces

FREETHINKERS liable for services in H.M. Forces should clearly understand their rights with regard to religion.

They should insist upon their own statement of Atheist, Agnostic, Rationalist, or non-religious being accepted, without modification, and duly recorded on the official papers.

If the person recording—usually an N.C.O. is not aware of the recruit's rights and refuses to accept the recruit's own statement, he should insist upon the matter being referred to the officer in charge. If the recruit's legal right is not then admitted, information should be sent to the General Secretary N.S.S. without delay. In all cases hitherto reported by the Society to the Army, Navy and Air Force authorities a satisfactory reply has been received.

Finally, a man serving in any of the Forces has the right at any time to have the description of himself with regard to religion altered should any change of opinion on his part have taken place.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. L. Ebury.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 6.30, Mrs. Buxton.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Friday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, A Lecture. Brockwell Park, 6.30, Mr. F. A. Ridley. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. F. A. Ridley.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30, Thursday, Mr. E. C. Saphin and supporting speakers. Sunday, 3.0, until dusk, various speakers.

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

BRIERFIELD: 11.45 a.m., Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

COLNE: 8.0, Thursday, Mr. J. Clayton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.30, Mr. Smithies. A Lecture.

HASLINGDEN (Market Cross): 7.30, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Stevenson Square): 7.30, Sunday, Messrs. G. Taylor, C. McCall and S. Newton.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Bury Market): 7.30 Saturday. Stevenson Square, 3.0, Sunday, Ashton Market, 7.30, Sunday. Blackburn Market, 7.15, Monday. Chorley Market, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. W. A. Atkinson will speak at the meetings.

PRIVATE family would welcome two Paying Guests; country residence in Sussex; a couple or two friends; large sunny balcony room (twin beds). Every modern comfort; home produce; highly recommended. NOT a prohibited area; moderate inclusive terms. Write Box K, c/o FREETHINKER, 61, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BOOK WANTED—*Psychopathia Sexualis*, by Kraft Ebbing—or similar works. Lowest cash price; loan or exchange. Box A.W., c/o FREETHINKER, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



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